



**Magic 1400s - 1950s**  
By Mike Caveney, Jim Steinmeyer,  
Ricky Jay and Noel Daniel (editor)  
Published by Taschen GmbH  
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Reviewed by Gordon Rutter

Magic has transformed over the years from the ability to control natural events by invoking the supernatural through to the conjuring and prestidigitation that we know today.

This latest work from Taschen covers magic from the start of the art of printing to the middle of the 20th century. As its overriding theme it uses the many posters and playbills that have been produced and recreates each beautifully in colour (where appropriate) on high quality paper with massive pages 20 by 13 inches. And there are 640 pages and over 1,000 illustrations.

It's a giant book and visually simply stunning. The quality of reproduction is outstanding and the choice of illustrations is breathtaking. As well as posters and handbills, there are also reproductions of magic lantern slides and also early photographs.

Oh and there are some words as well. In common with many Taschen books the text is in English, German and French. Each chapter is repeated with the appropriate language text but of course the illustrations are different.

The introduction is written by Ricky Jay, from whose personal collection a number of the illustrations come. As well as a magician, Jay is a collector of anomalies. The body of the text is by Mike Caveney and Jim Steinmeyer. Caveney is a practising magician and historian and Steinmeyer is a magic designer and historian (most recently writing a biography of Charles Fort).

It's difficult to focus on just one chapter as a highlight but in view of the interests of *Paranormal Magazine* it has to be Steinmeyer's chapter on 'The Supernatural and the Spirit Worlds'. In this single chapter we have a history of Magic Lantern shows - the Phantasmagoria, Pepper's ghost, Davenport spirit cabinets and the appearance of the dead on photographs and on stage as entertainment. It, like the rest of the book, simply leaves you wanting more.

This is quite simply the most beautiful book I have ever had the privilege to review and I can't recommend it highly enough.

